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McGOWAN, Mark G. — *Michael Power: The Struggle to Build the Catholic Church on the Canadian Frontier*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. Pp. 378.

Mark McGowan's elegant biography of the first Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto, Michael Power, reflects the author's roots in social history by presenting the subject within the tapestry of Western Ontario in the 1830s and 1840s, with its primitive roads and communications, the tentativeness of its religious and social institutions, the demographics of its ethnic and religious divisions, and the hardscrabble lives of Power's frontier parishioners. Although, as the author candidly admits, the immediate source documents for Power are sparse, McGowan succeeds in bringing Power to life as an individual, not just as a churchman. McGowan frankly presents Power's flaws as a shy and rigid personality, but softens their impact by explaining them in the context of the challenges and isolation that Power faced all his adult life. There is a keen sense of geography throughout, conveying how place and primitive conditions shaped the lives of even the most determined centralizer and organizer such as Power.

Born in 1804 to parents of Irish background, Power spent his early childhood in Halifax. His intellect and devotion were recognized early, and he was sent to study at the Collège de Montréal and in 1824 in the Grand Séminaire at Québec. Due to the pressing need for anglophone priests in the diocese of Québec, he was fast-tracked in his seminary studies and released from serving in the Maritimes. However, his regimented training did not prepare him for what awaited him on the frontier. While understandable in terms of the need to place clergy of the right linguistic background where needed, Power's appointments in Drummondville and Petite Nation, the administrative centre of the Papineau seigneurie, were unsatisfying and exhausting. Power had to travel vast distances to reach isolated pockets of parishioners whose adherence to Catholic practices was sporadic. McGowan examines Power's placements in the context of Lower Canada's feudal seigneuries and *fabriques*, where church and laity came into conflict over who really controlled parish administration and property. Inhospitable weather, cholera, and social exclusion made life unbearable for Power at Petite Nation, where he fell out with Papineau over the establishment of a Catholic school, and Papineau refused to collect the funds necessary to support the work of the parish and Power himself. In both cases, Power asked to be relieved of the assignment.

Bishop Lartigue next sent him to Ste-Martine in the Châteauguay River Valley, a

more hospitable placement for Power, who had tried, in an alien atmosphere, to recreate the church in its familiar form on the frontier. McGowan summarizes Power's difficulties:

The frontier had frightened him.... Instead of learning to move to the rhythm of frontier church life, he retreated behind rigorous church law. The law gave him a sense of security and purpose within a new reality that often seemed alien, threatening, and disordered. It provided him with a program to follow and a set of structures through which he could contain and corral the restless and chaotic elements he confronted.... But during his six years on the frontier Power also learned that by enforcing the laws, regulations, and disciplines of the church, he could neither compel people to pay him nor convince them to like him. (pp. 82, 83)

Meanwhile, however, ultramontanist, with its emphasis on authority, stability, and structure and its impact on popular piety, was revitalizing the church in a manner convivial to Power's own inclinations and talents. Power was transferred for a time to La Nativité at Laprairie across from Montreal, where he became the confidant of the new Bishop, Ignace Bourget. The two persuaded London and Rome to create the metropolitan see of Québec by "playing the card of the church's role as the agent of social control" (p. 130). Initially reluctant, Power was chosen to be Bishop of the new Diocese of Toronto. He was consecrated in 1842.

Power reacted to his elevation with new confidence as he established a strong, centralized ecclesiastical authority and ownership of church property in the Bishop, all in harmony with the British Crown, while inculcating discipline to a high degree and wrestling with the ongoing problems of finding enough priests — he had only 28 by the end of 1846 — to staff his enormous territory. He had moderate success by inviting in the Jesuits as missionaries to the Natives. Nevertheless, he was stern and unbending to priests who failed to obey rules, and McGowan is candid in explaining this as among Power's "personality flaws" (p. 164). No hagiography this!

In contrast to the sectarian polarization that occurred in the 1850s, Power had great success in forging positive relations between his office and the province's political and religious leaders. In the chapter entitled "Virtually a Canadian", McGowan provides an important description of Power's support of denominational schools in the fluid period of fledgling legislative initiatives for schools and relative denominational peace. While McGowan does not detail the particulars of the professional relationship with Egerton Ryerson at the time Ryerson appointed Power to the first school board in Canada West, he emphasizes the cordiality between them and the respect Ryerson had for Power's moderate approach to school affairs.

There is a fine chapter surveying the impact of the Irish famine immigrants on Canada West and describing their influx by the thousands into Toronto in the summer of 1847, impoverished and dying of typhus. This created the greatest crisis of all for Power's ministry and led to his death from typhus on October 1, 1847, at the age of 43. With sick clergy in his own quarters, Power rallied civic leaders to coordinate relief efforts and went himself to minister to the sick in the fetid "fever sheds" at the Toronto waterfront, where he became infected. His death shocked church and town

alike. Its drama turned him into a martyr. Although McGowan vividly describes Power's lasting contributions, he is cognizant of the limitations of Power's reputation to date:

In light of all of this — the focus on Power's famine martyrdom, the fact that so many of his colleagues died within a few years of his own passing, and the massive changes taking place in Canadian society and life — it is perhaps not surprising that the whole of Michael Power's life and work seemed to have been reduced to a few memories of his last days. (p. 265)

If anything can expand Power's place in history, this book will. It is thoroughly researched, and its useful appendices include the original and a translation of Power's 1842 Toronto Diocesan Regulations, which illustrate the focus of Power's endeavours while he was Bishop of Toronto between 1842 and 1847. With its fluid writing and lightly worn erudition, McGowan's self-deprecating introduction draws the lay as well as the academic reader into his text. This impeccably written account is both biography and general social history presented by a masterful academic who has an unusually fine way with words. It is a pleasure to read.

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MÉNDEZ, Cecilia — *The Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820–1850*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. Pp. 343.

In *The Plebeian Republic* Cecilia Méndez gives an account of the complex process of transition from colony to republic in Peru. The study focuses upon the experience of a rural society of the highlands traditionally regarded as "historically isolated". In particular, Méndez focuses attention on the plebeian rural actors and their political role at the dawn of the republican period, stressing the difference between their role and the ways of legitimation that had been practised by indigenous elites of noble origin from Cusco.

In contrast, Huanta's political leaders emerged from plebeian classes and had new opportunities of social mobility as a consequence of the *caudillista* state: they were chiefs whose authority was based neither on their nobility nor on their community rights, but rather on war. The latter legitimated their power, while the state legitimated the war. The author refers to the "plebeianization of politics" (an expression coined by the historian Jorge Basadre), which in her opinion did not take place so much among the main leaders as at the base of the political system.

Though the borders between disciplines started to fade long ago, it remains difficult to write a history related to the Andean world that incorporates the historical experience of indigenous peoples, above all that of the *indios del común*. One of the main difficulties has been the scarcity of sources or their partiality, considering that